UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.3/1997/18/Add.2
9 January 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-ninth session
10-14 February 1997
Item 12 of the provisional agenda*

TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN STATISTICS

Crucial issues on technical cooperation

A framework for the description and analysis of technical assistance

Note by Statistics Canada

Addendum

There are three components of the framework:

1. Supply of foreign assistance: what are the elements of supply and the conditions surrounding it needed in order to ensure success?

Examples of elements: qualities of the adviser (congeniality, adaptability, inventiveness, sensitivity, experience, physical stamina); qualities of the support system (range and availability of documentation, access to network of qualified advisers, credibility of supporting system); capacity for sustainment; capacity to bring up reinforcements and so on. Surrounding conditions: relevance of subject; sympathy for the host country; ease of financing; assurance of comfortable conditions for adviser; local support system; efficient backstopping from headquarters.

2. Demand for foreign assistance: what are the elements of demand and the conditions surrounding it needed in order to ensure success?

Examples: clarity of purpose, definition of terms of reference, timely allocation of responsibilities to host country staff. Conditions: receptivity,

* E/CN.3/1997/1.

97-00627 (E) 210197

/...

ability to change work patterns, support from other agencies in host country, ability to intervene effectively in cases of tension or disagreement and so on.

3. Criteria for defining success: success can be viewed from the demand and from the supply side. There is no necessary coincidence of the criteria used for each side nor is agreement between them assured.

4. Elements of success include, in the short term: completion of specific projects and publication (in the case of statistical information) or deployment (in the case of trained staff, new software/hardware) of results.

5. In the medium term: increased independence from foreign advice; augmented capacity to take local initiatives; extension of host office's activities; enhanced visibility of home office.

6. In the long term: sustainable capability to accommodate new demands and circumstances; perception of the host institution as both credible and capable; consolidation of statistical roles and responsibilities; greater capacity to manage budgetary upheavals and so on.

7. Analysis: there are two main subjects for analysis and both result from tensions among these elements.

First: requests for assistance are seldom made when circumstances surrounding supply and demand are at their best. Typically: host institution may not benefit from widespread local support; staff may be divided as to advisability of foreign assistance; there may be solid resistance to necessary change; circumstances (financial and material) may be poor and so on. Likewise: for the supplying institution, adviser may not be available on time; best adviser may not be available; there may be language and cultural barriers; there may be incompatibility with regard to the advice given by two different sources of assistance and so on.

Second: there may be different perceptions as to what constitutes success; and third: there may be significant differences as to what constitutes necessary success in the short, medium and longer terms.

For example: from the point of view of the host, all that may matter is the building up of a sustainable capability; from the point of view of the adviser, all that may matter is the completion of the specific task (or vice versa). This conflict may not be obvious to either party, in which case it is not until late that its consequences will become apparent. The adviser may strive for statistical reliability of results; the host for speed of release so as to enhance the visibility of the institution. The adviser may value international comparability; the host, national idiosyncrasies and so on.

8. Mechanisms for conflict resolution: there must be the specification of a number of mechanisms.

First: mechanisms to resolve conflict over desirable versus actual conditions for supply. Typically, there are, at the extremes, two options - Go and No go. In practice, a mechanism is required to detect the nature of circumstances and

to act so as to improve them (for adviser, more support, better local conditions, and so on) in order to increase the chances of success.

Second: mechanisms to resolve conflict over desirable conditions surrounding demand versus conditions prevailing. The host must recognize the obstacles to success and be given pre-assistance support (better material conditions, neutralization of home opposition to assistance, and so on) so as to neutralize them.

Third: mechanisms must exist to narrow perceptions of success, should a gap evolve between the perceptions of the adviser and the perceptions of the host. A requirement is that there be detection of the gap and the capacity to bring about prompt intervention.

Examples of mechanisms: thorough evaluation of assistance projects, particularly those that did not work out (evaluation must attempt to identify circumstances that appear to have brought about failure. Proper confidentiality provisions must surround the process in order not to embarrass the host and the source of assistance); constitution of a "library of failures and successes" and proper briefing of advisers on relevant elements of the library.

9. Resurrection of tripartite reviews (of substance and not of finance or pure management) using credible consultants to conduct them. Association with an experienced assistance provider who will process an audit of the project.